

Teachers withdraw suspension, vow to continue protest

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Protest resumes hours after temporary suspension



Teachers stage a sit-in at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka on Sunday afternoon. Photo: Star

An hour after announcing the suspension of their work abstention, government primary school teachers last night declared that they would continue their protest.

Around 10:30pm, Khayrun Nahar Lipi, general secretary of the Bangladesh Primary Teachers' Association, made the announcement before hundreds of teachers gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar.

DAY AT A GLANCE

- Primary teachers go on strike for higher pay scale
- Classes at over 65,000 schools stay halted
- Non-MPO teachers hold demo over MPO inclusion; attempt to march towards Secretariat
- Police use water cannons, sound grenades to disperse them

She claimed that the earlier suspension had been made "under pressure" from the authorities.

"My job may be at risk, but I am withdrawing the suspension of the strike," she said, adding that teachers would continue their sit-in at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Earlier, around 9:30pm, following a meeting at the Secretariat between ministry officials and teacher leaders, Shamsuddin Masud, another leader of the movement, announced that teachers were suspending their work abstention after the government assured them that their demands would be reviewed with the finance ministry.

Meanwhile, with annual exams barely three weeks away, classrooms across the country fell silent yesterday as teachers launched a nationwide strike demanding pay hikes and promotions.

Classes at 65,567 government primary schools remained suspended throughout the day due to the abstention. More than 3.83 lakh assistant teachers stopped taking classes, disrupting lessons at nearly every government primary school in the country.



Police use water cannons on teachers of government-approved institutions outside the Monthly Pay Order (MPO) scheme as they attempt to break through a barricade near the Secretariat in Dhaka yesterday. The protesters, under the banner of Sammilito Non-MPO Oikya Parishad, demand inclusion of their institutions in the MPO programme. Photo: Palash Khan

The protest followed a police action at Shahbagh on Saturday, where law enforcers baton-charged, fired sound grenades, and used water cannons to disperse teachers marching from the Central Shaheed Minar. Over 100 were injured, according to organisers.

Teachers have been demanding an upgrade of their pay scale from grade-13 to grade-10, along with promotion parity and equal status with secondary-level teachers.

Police action on non-MPO teachers

Meanwhile, police yesterday used water cannons and sound grenades to disperse non-MPO teachers demonstrating in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

The protesters, who have been demanding the inclusion of their institutions under the Monthly Pay Order (MPO) scheme since November 2, attempted to march towards the Secretariat around 4:00pm.

Several were injured and a few detained, witnesses said.

Rights organisations Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) and Rashtra Sangskar Andolan condemned the use of force, calling it a violation of citizens' constitutional right to peaceful assembly.

They demanded punishment for those responsible, medical care for the injured, and urged the government to resolve the issue through dialogue.